

228 SIMILE ZOLA, NOVELIST AND REFORMER

and when you raise your voices for pity
and justice my task will
be accomplished.

"Yes, a cry of pity, an appeal for justice, I ask no more. Should the soil still crack, should the disasters predicted convulse the world to-morrow, it will be because nay voice will have remained unheard."

Thus, in "Germinal," Zola gave rein to his humanitarian feelings, and in recognition thereof prudes shrieked

indignantly: "That man is at it again ! What a beast he must be!" And on their side capitalists, battening on the labour of the poor and alarmed for the safety of their pelf, howled in chorus: "This book ought to be suppressed, it certainly must not be allowed as a play. It means revolution, robbery, rascality of every kind."

But Zola, though he suffered secretly, — all unjust attacks brought him the keenest suffering, — hid it, and passed on.

There was a touch of humanitarianism even in his next book, "L'OEuvre," for it set forth many of the evils of bohemian life, and embraced an appeal for woman in the person of the unhappy Christine, its heroine. Critics may shake their heads, indeed some have done so, and say sapiently: "All this was not art." They may laugh, too, at the idea of reforming the world by novels. But even if, judging Zola by some of his books, one may occasionally feel

inclined to set no very lofty estimate on his artistry, surely the trend of his works, the knowledge of their aim, the circumstances under which they were written, must increase one's respect for their author as a man. And, after all, what is the mere artist? As often as not he is penned within a fanatical creed, bound to narrow formulas, blind to everything beyond